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FRANCE-USSR: President Pompidou should reap both domestic and external benefits from his visit to the USSR on 11-12 January.

The French claim that the visit, billed as "unofficial" and actually arranged in early fall, was requested by the Soviets and that it will focus on European matters. From Pompidou's point of view, the visit is particularly well-timed, coming shortly before national parliamentary elections and at the outset of major East-West negotiations.

The government is eager to undercut the Communist-Socialist coalition which, after a slow start marred by public bickering, is now demonstrating increasing unity. Polls indicate that a growing number of Frenchmen, faced with a somewhat lackluster government still haunted by scandals, see the left as a viable alternative despite government efforts to invoke the "Communist menace." Pompidou can use the visit to counter leftist propaganda that alleges a Gaullist "slide toward Atlanticism" and at the same time emphasize the "special relationship" Paris has so assiduously cultivated with Moscow. Foreign Minister Schumann has already pointed out the line the government will take in the electoral campaign: only a staunchly anti-Communist government could maintain close ties with Moscow without adopting a subservient position.

On the external side, the visit underscores the French intent to play an independent and key role in any negotiations affecting Europe. This long-standing desire takes on a special cast, given the current preparatory talks on a Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe and initial talks on mutual and balanced force reductions scheduled for later in January. Both Paris and Moscow will hope to exploit the talks in developing their respective position vis-a-vis other nations in preparation for the East-West negotiations.

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Viewed from Moscow, the visit, coming soon after Defense Minister Grechko's official trip to France, offers yet another opportunity to demonstrate the vitality of the "special relationship." The Soviets apparently are willing to allow the French Communist Party to pay whatever price is necessary for this further demonstration of good governmental relations in the East-West context. Moscow may well judge, however, that the Pompidou trip will weaken the "red menace" theme many Gaullists are likely to use during the electoral campaign. To show that it has not turned all of its attention away from the French Communists, the Kremlin is sending senior Politburo member Suslov to France next week for the 20th congress of the French party.

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SOMALIA: President Siad may be facing a serious challenge to his position from within the ruling council.

Siad appears to have lost the loyalty of many members of the council and other key government officials. Mogadiscio is rife with rumors of plots and clashes between Siad and council members. An unusually large number of council members have been out of Mogadiscio recently; they have been officially listed as being on leave or sick, but Siad, apparently believing that any opposition would be more easily controlled outside the capital, may have dispatched them to the provinces. Meanwhile, the general populace is grumbling over shortages of consumer goods, and civil servants are incensed over a government demand for a donation of a month's salary to cope with the effects of a recent cyclone.

Since coming to power in 1969, Siad has taken a number of bold and often unpopular moves, including purges and executions of important opponents, campaigns to eradicate tribalism, strengthening ties to the Soviet Union, and improving his own position at the expense of the rest of the government hierarchy. These steps have precipitated several plots, tribal unrest, and growing dissatisfaction with the government and its policies. There is also considerable disenchantment with the presence of several hundred Soviet military advisers. Some of Siad's opponents would probably act to reduce Soviet influence in Somalia should he be ousted.

Siad has managed to contain threats to his position so far largely because of support from the military and the powerful National Security Service. Should Siad fail to re-establish his control over the council or lose his grasp on the military or the security service, he would have considerable difficulty staying in power.

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PAKISTAN: Islamabad is taking steps to improve significantly the combat capabilities of the Pakistani Air Force.

The air force will acquire at least five Mirage aircraft from France [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] The aircraft will be the first of 30 Mirage 5s purchased by Islamabad in 1970, and Pakistan reportedly has an option to buy at least 20 more. The supersonic Mirage 5 will improve the air force's ground attack capabilities--now provided primarily by some 130 subsonic F-86 Sabres. Pakistan reportedly has also ordered 18 Mirage III jet interceptors to augment its inventory of more than 20 Mirage IIIs previously acquired from France.

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In addition, China delivered 30 new MIG-19 jet fighter bombers to Pakistan early this year to make up for Pakistani fighter losses during the 1971 war with India. Prior to the war, Pakistan had obtained 134 MIG-19s from China to use in both air defense and ground attack roles. Peking also will provide in the next year a small number of TU-16 jet medium bombers. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] The bombers will bolster Pakistan's small force of aging US Canberra and Chinese IL-28 light bombers. The TU-16s would be able to strike all major targets in India on missions from Pakistan.

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The air force is continuing to improve and expand its air bases both to handle the new aircraft and to allow dispersal of the inventory in wartime. New runways are being constructed at several bases, and concrete hangarages and revetted hardstands are being built to conceal and protect the aircraft.

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NOTES

CUBA-CARIBBEAN: Agreement has finally been reached for the establishment of diplomatic relations at the ambassadorial level between Cuba and Jamaica, Guyana, Barbados, and Trinidad-Tobago.

declarations to this effect will be signed today

The intention of the four Caribbean countries to establish ties with Cuba has been public knowledge for about two months, but problems with the specific wording of the agreement delayed its signing.

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